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'Ears stunned with the din of arms'

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‘Ears stunned with the din of arms’: Belfast, Volunteer Sermons and James Magee, 1779-1781

MICHAEL O’CONNOR

There exists a not inconsiderable body of literature on the Irish Volunteers of the 1770 period onwards. Much of this material has provided information on the various corps, the composition of the movement, its political objectives, enormous national popularity and the strident tensions that would be evident between orthodox and radical reformers within the organisation after 1782.¹ Recent historiography has demonstrated fierce disagreement among scholars regarding the significance of the Volunteers and their contribution to eighteenth-century political discourse. Ian McBride in his impressive survey of eighteenth-century Presbyterianism entitled *Scripture Politics* (1998) has located the Volunteers of Ulster as forming part of a literature of radicalized dissent, the more revolutionary elements of which would later find active expression in the

- 1 Allan Blackstock, *Double Traitors?: The Belfast Volunteers and Yeomanry 1778-1828* (Belfast, 2002); Idem, ‘Loyal Clubs and Societies in Ulster, 1770-1800’ in James Kelly & Martyn J. Powell (eds.), *Clubs and Societies in Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2010), pp. 451-458; James Kelly, ‘The Politics of Volunteering, 1779-93’, *Irish Sword*, 22:88 (2000), pp. 139-56; Ian McBride, *Scripture Politics: Ulster Presbyterians and Irish Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 123-133, 152-161; Breandán Mac Suibhne, ‘Whiskey, Potatoes and Paddies: Volunteering and the Construction of the Irish Nation in North West Ulster, 1778-1782’ in Peter Jupp and Eoin Magennis (eds.), *Crowds in Ireland, c. 1720-1920* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 45-82; R.B. McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution, 1760-1801* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 255-261, 271-273, 280-281; Thomas Nevin, *A History of the Volunteers of 1782* (Dublin, 1845); Stephen O’Connor, ‘The Volunteers, 1778-93: Iconography and Identity’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2008); Idem, ‘The Volunteers of Dublin 1778-84: a short study of urban volunteering’ in Gillian O’Brien & Finola O’Kane (eds.), *Georgian Dublin* (Dublin, 2008), pp. 68-77; Padraig Ó Snodaigh, ‘Some Political and Military Aspects of the Irish Volunteers’, *Irish Sword*, 13 (1978-9), pp. 217-229; Idem, *The Irish Volunteers, 1715-1793* (Dublin, 1995); T.G.F. Patterson, ‘The Volunteer Companies of Ulster, 1778-1793’, *Irish Sword*, 7 (1965-6), pp. 90-116, 204-30, 308-12, and 8 (1967-8), pp. 23-32, 92-97, 210-17; David H. Smyth, ‘The Volunteer Movement in Ulster: Background and Development 1745-85’ (Ph.D. thesis, Queen’s University Belfast, 1974); Idem, ‘The Volunteers and Parliament 1779-84’ in Thomas Bartlett and David Hayton (eds.), *Penal Era and Golden Age* (Belfast, 1979), pp. 113-136; Peter Smyth, ‘Our Cloud-Cap’t Grenadiers’: The Volunteers as a Military Force’, *Irish Sword*, 13 (1978-9), pp. 185-207.

1798 United Irish rebellion. Padhraig Higgins has attributed one legacy of the Volunteers as the creation of a dense political culture. He has argued cogently that Volunteering and the development of Volunteer-initiated activities expanded the scope of political participation particularly for non-elites and that this created an Irish nation of politicians.² Gerald Hall moreover posits that the Volunteer movement with its concern with constitutional ideas created the beginnings of an early modern tradition of Ulster liberalism.³ This, however, is at odds with other commentators who have stressed the Volunteers as a force reinforcing confessional differences, acting as 'the cutting edge of the establishment at the local level' and reinforcing tensions between Protestant settlers and Catholic natives.⁴

The purpose of this essay is less concerned with these overarching issues, which have been much documented, but rather to focus on an aspect of Volunteer culture and its legacy that has not been researched: the Volunteers' appropriation of print, specifically the printed Volunteer sermons 1779-1781, published at the peak of Volunteer popularity, and assessing the vital contribution these sermons made regarding printing nationally. This is a critical area of study since Belfast became a publishing centre of Volunteer-printed material throughout this time. The Volunteer sermons have received critical attention in recent scholarship: Volunteer addresses have been discussed in the contexts of radicalised dissent, in terms of an endemic Volunteer culture and the politicization of non-elites; these addresses moreover have been understood as an expression of national political discourse and as partly contributing to a new emergent Irish national identity; the Volunteer sermons also have been investigated using the genre of eighteenth-century 'crisis' sermons.⁵ To date, however, no in depth study exists of Volunteer sermons produced between 1779-1781 in terms of the historiography of the Irish book. This is unfortunate especially since decisive publication elements of these sermons – for example, imprint details, retail price and distribution arrangements – actually shed light on the potential buyers/readers of this material and Volunteer demands regarding what constituted apposite and noteworthy material. An analysis of these sermons in terms of the history of the book moreover offers more than simply revealing likely readers, but traces the popularity and influence of Volunteerism in Ulster to a wealthy and active Dissenting community and explains the preponderance of Belfast Volunteer sermons in 1779-1781 as a result of the critical intersection between Dissenting confidence, commercial primacy and printing self-assurance in Belfast.

2 Padhraig Higgins, *A Nation of Politicians: Gender, Patriotism, and Political Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Wisconsin, 2010).

3 Gerald R. Hall, *Ulster Liberalism, 1778-1876: The Middle Path* (Dublin, 2011), pp. 16-32.

4 Ó Snodaigh, 'Some Police and Military Aspects of the Irish Volunteers', p. 229.

5 McBride, *Scripture Politics*, pp. 127-130; Higgins, *A Nation of Politicians*, pp. 92-106, 173-174; Allan Blackstock, 'Armed Citizens and Christian Soldiers: Crisis Sermons and Ulster Presbyterians, 1715-1803', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 22 (2007), pp. 81-105). Strabane Volunteer sermons are also mentioned in Mac Suibhne, 'Whiskey, Potatoes and Paddies', pp. 62-63.

6 ESTC (accessed May, 2011) only records 307 titles printed by Magee.

The principal Irish printer of Volunteer sermons in this period was Belfast printer and bookseller, James Magee (1707-1797). Magee achieved national significance by this printing and retail of Volunteer addresses. This essay focuses on the marketing, distribution, reception and controversy of Magee's sermons, their significance in terms of the national print trade and the impact they brought to bear upon printing in the smaller towns of Ulster, none of which has hitherto been assessed. This essay also contextualises the enormity of Volunteer support in Belfast, and obliquely signals the existence of a vibrant literary culture within the organisation which was manifest in the publication of these addresses.

James Magee and the Eighteenth-Century Belfast Book Trade

James Magee (1707-1797) was crucially important to the eighteenth-century Belfast book trade. He was the chief Belfast printer throughout the century and was the foremost printer in the town of plays, sermons, chapbooks and political tracts and pamphlets. He had a career spanning an impressive fifty-six year period: beginning in 1735 and terminating in 1789, although he continued in a retail capacity until 1791.

To place his primacy as a printer in context, the English Short Title Catalogue (hereafter ESTC) records 802 titles printed in Belfast in 1700-1800, of which Magee produced 377 works, making him responsible for forty-seven percent of the printed output of Belfast throughout the century, although he is likely to have produced more works than this.⁶ As well as being a prolific printer, he printed the most popular texts and genres sought by readers. As such, he is deserving of study, not simply owing to his productivity, but because his prolific corpus also signals contemporary reading appetites and maps the changing contours of literary tastes throughout eighteenth-century Belfast and Ulster. Magee's publications confirm the perennial favourites such as devotional works, chapbooks and schoolbooks, as well as those works whose popularity, brilliant and rapid, was nonetheless short-lived, for example the Volunteer sermons of 1779-1781, which are the subject of this essay.⁷

For the most part of his career Magee exhibited the hallmarks of a country or provincial printer. Firstly, he produced a diverse range of publications, seeking to appeal to each and every reader, which is typical of those at work in the provinces. Also, facilitated by the absence of copyright legislation, which did not apply to Ireland throughout the eighteenth century, Magee engaged primarily in reprinting London editions of texts. These were texts which the market had confirmed as popular sellers and he rarely embarked on first-time printings, which were a greater risk to capital outlay. It was during the 1770s however that Magee began to contest his status as a small town printer who occupied a

7 For further information on Magee's career, his practices, publications and his significance, see Michael O'Connor, 'James Magee (1707-1797) and the Belfast Print Trade, 1771-1781' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University Belfast, 2007).

peripheral position within the trade and engaged only in commercially risk-free ventures. He engaged in original publications, published new genres of material and produced more politically controversial material thereby emerging a newly confident printer.⁸ This confidence can be witnessed most saliently by Magee's publication of Volunteer sermons from 1779 until 1781 in which the Belfast printer occupied importance on a national stage and his publications impacted upon the progress of printing in Ulster. Ironically, it was a situation causing grave consternation regarding national security that was to give rise to one of the climaxes of Magee's career.

The Invasion Crisis in Ireland: Belfast Volunteers

In 1779 Ireland faced an invasion crisis resulting from the war campaign against America. The country was denuded of British troops and trade embargoes, war expenses and an economic slump meant that government did not have the resources to finance a militia. The entry of France and Spain into the Revolutionary war – June 1778 and June 1779 respectively – caused considerable consternation. Ministers lamented the situation and from their pulpits decried Ireland's vulnerability to attack. The Rev. Joseph Chambers in a Volunteer address in October 1779 claimed 'ears [were] stunned with the din of arms' and all were 'terrified with the threats of an invading foe'.⁹ The fear of foreign attack from continental Europe and the imperative for self-defence set in motion the establishment of Volunteer companies which occurred enthusiastically throughout the country at this time, but most especially in Ulster.

The Volunteers, drawing upon the eighteenth-century ideal of the citizen-soldier, affirmed their civic identity and patriotism by taking up arms to fend off potential foreign aggression. While their objective initially was national defence, the Volunteers quickly emerged as a force calling for political reform and concerned with renegotiating Ireland's legislative position in relation to Britain. Volunteerism quickly became "'a trade of recreation" ... [and] an opportunity for political agitation'.¹⁰

Throughout the country as a whole Volunteerism was quick to proliferate. By October 1779 three Volunteer companies had been established in Belfast – the First Company of Belfast Volunteers, the United Companies of Belfast Volunteers, and the Belfast Volunteer Company. In total, they comprised a force that numbered approximately 340 men.¹¹ The smaller towns throughout Ulster soon followed their example in the establishment of their own defence companies. By August 1779 the *Belfast News-Letter* boasted the movement was an estimated national

8 For example, between 1771 and 1781 the Belfast printer engaged in original publications; he printed 148 titles, among the most prolific of his career. Of this number thirty-seven titles were first-time printings, which is not an inconsiderable sum for a printer working in the provinces.

9 Joseph Chambers, *What Circumstances Render a War Compatible with Christianity* (Belfast, 1779), p.7. All subsequent references to Volunteer sermons in footnotes are given with their short-titles. For full publication details, see Appendix.

10 McBride, *Scripture Politics*, p. 125.

11 *Belfast News-Letter* (hereafter BNL), 29 Oct.-2 Nov. 1779.

force of '47,000 effective men', including a 'glorious body' of 22,000 deriving from Ulster companies, figures which are likely to have been overinflated.¹² It is probable that there may have been approximately 40,000 Volunteers at the peak of the movement, including 20,000 Volunteers from Ulster, thereby making evident the organisation's appeal, most especially in the north of Ireland.¹³

The popularity of the movement did however cause anxiety. Robert Sinclair in a Volunteer address delivered to the Larne Volunteers expressed disquiet that the love of arms was spreading 'like a contagion' and he feared Volunteerism had become a vogue.¹⁴ The worry that armed conflict was becoming a fashionable stance may have been partially justified as Volunteering impacted upon all aspects of society throughout this time.¹⁵ The constant reviews and parades, in addition to the celebration of the Volunteers in literature, pottery, painting and prints demonstrated a society in which Volunteerism was paramount.¹⁶ Attendance at Volunteer public displays and the attachment of Volunteer motifs to textiles indicated the public's overwhelming approbation of the movement.¹⁷ The Volunteers flourished also in print: they featured in contemporary Irish fiction,¹⁸ memoirs,¹⁹ poetry,²⁰ and as authors of verse, especially of martial themes.²¹ The Volunteers were a conspicuous public presence, not simply on the field, but in the press, meeting house and at the theatre.²² Indeed, in 1780 one traveller wrote:

On my last visit to Ireland I thought the people feverish, but now I think they are nearly frantic; every male above the very ragged gave the military salute; nothing hardly is spoke of but Volunteers.²³

12 BNL, 13-17 Aug. 1779.

13 McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution*, 256-257; Smyth, 'The Volunteers and Parliament 1779-84', p. 116.

14 Robert Sinclair, *Fortitude Explained and Recommended* (Belfast, 1779), pp. 20-21.

15 Aside from the obvious military training, reviews and parades, Volunteer corps also engaged in social activities, including attending lavish banquets and balls, the drinking of toasts, and partaking in bonfires and illuminations. See Padhraig Higgins, 'Bonfires, Illuminations, and Joy: Celebratory Street Politics and Uses of 'the nation' during the Volunteer Movement', *Éire-Ireland*, 42: 3&4 (2007), pp. 173-206.

16 The preponderance of Volunteer prints provides one indication of the popularity of the movement. Book sale catalogues make evident that Volunteer prints continued to sell in and outside of Ireland in the 1780s and 1790s. See *A Catalogue of a Very Large and Valuable Collection of Books in the Several Branches of Science and Literature* (Birmingham: 1788), p. 297; *A Poetic Description of Choice and Valuable Prints, Published by Mr. Macklin, at The Poets' Gallery, Fleet Street* (London, 1794), pp. 65-66.

17 McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution*, p. 260.

18 For example, *The Triumph of Prudence over Passion*. Vol. 1 (Dublin, 1781) pp. 5, 16-17, 212; *The Fair Syrian. A Novel. In Two Volumes* (Dublin, 1787), p. 71.

19 *Retrospections of Dorothea Herbert 1770-1806* (Dublin, 2004), pp. 57-59.

20 John Gilborne, *The Volunteer-Review, an Heroic Poem; On the Institution of the Volunteer Armies of Ireland* (Dublin, [1778]); *The Patriot Soldier; or, Irish Volunteer* (Belfast, 1789).

21 *Stanzas on Duelling: Inscribed to Wogdon, the Celebrated Pistol-maker. By an Irish Volunteer* (London, 1782).

22 For example, on 4 November 1778 *Tamberlaine the Great* was performed at the desire of the Belfast Volunteers to commemorate the birthday of William III. BNL 30 Oct.-3 Nov. 1778.

This is confirmed by the *Belfast News-Letter* which zealously reported Volunteer parades and reviews, included parliamentary intelligence and reproduced petitions and resolutions of the movement. News was given of Volunteer toasts and reviews, the latest patriotic address and political pamphlet were advertised, and information was communicated about goods and services stimulated by the movement.

As the nucleus of the Volunteers, Belfast was 'a seething focus of excitement at this time'.²⁴ The years 1780 and 1781 were an especially significant moment. The town was brilliantly illuminated to celebrate the legislative reforms effected by Parliament – the Declaratory Act was repealed and the right to legislate for Ireland was renounced at Westminster. The Belfast Volunteers also issued an address to Henry Grattan and Barry Yelverton on the theme of the independent rights of Ireland, and the first grand review of Volunteers (performed by the Earl of Charlemont) was held in the town in 1781. This Volunteer review was the largest gathering of Volunteers ever to take place with an excess of 5,000 Volunteers in attendance.²⁵

The output of Belfast presses unsurprisingly reflected this zeal for volunteering in its proliferation of Volunteer texts. To begin with, Volunteer addresses, delivered by ministers for the purpose of Volunteer recruitment, were preached to Volunteer corps and quickly made the transition into print. These sermons were among the most popular of the Volunteer texts in this period. Chronologically, these addresses were followed in quick succession by the publication of various overtly political polemics and treatises, corresponding to the movement's political aspirations which became evident around 1780 onwards. This body of Belfast-printed material included pamphlets discussing topical issues such as the promotion of home industry, the removal both of stringent trade restrictions affecting Irish traders and restrictions against Dissenters occupying public office, as well as calls for equality in the political process and parliamentary reform. These publications were a manifestation of increased Dissenter confidence in a period when Dissenters were assessing what role they should play in the public sphere. In fact, Presbyterians were for the first time seriously engaged in political debates in print that were not immediately concerned with ecclesiastic or theological issues of relevance to their identity as Presbyterians. In Volunteer addresses Presbyterians explored, interrogated and expressed political sentiments central to their understanding of national identity and their experience as Irish Dissenters as they now ventured into the political arena and engaged in active political participation. The increasing confidence of Presbyterians in their use of

23 Cited in McBride, *Scripture Politics*, p. 125.

24 Francis Joseph Bigger & John S. Bigger (eds.), *Articles and Sketches: Biographical, Historical, Topographical by Francis Joseph Bigger* (Dublin, 1927), p. 133.

25 D.J. Owen, *History of Belfast* (Belfast, 1921), pp. 414–415; McBride, *Scripture Politics*, p. 125; *BNL*, 20–24 Jul. 1781.

print in the late 1770s is markedly evident in the kinds of Volunteer texts printed in Belfast 1779-1782.

Volunteerism, Literary Culture and Print

All forms of print were successfully harnessed by the movement in order for recruitment and motivational purposes, as well as to inform of the latest review and parade. The preponderance of Volunteer texts from Belfast presses can be classified into three main areas. Firstly, there were patriotic sermons which were given by ministers before assembled Volunteer congregations. These addresses articulated the invasion fears of the community, sought to channel anxiety into increased recruitment and offered vociferous encouragement to existing Volunteers corps. In 1779-1781 James Magee became the chief Irish printer of Volunteer sermons, specializing in the publication of these addresses, of which I shall elaborate further in the following section.

The second type of material included military guidebooks and instruction, offering direction, quite literally, to Volunteers for reviews and parades and explicitly for the purposes of edifying a force untrained in military life.²⁶ It is likely that this material was read avidly by most of the rank and file of the movement and comprised compulsory reading for large Volunteer reviews. This is intimated by the comments of an unnamed correspondent from Bridgetown (Wexford) in 1778 who affirmed that the Volunteers 'are better acquainted with military manoeuvres, and take more real pains to acquire instruction, than ... the regular corps, who are hired by government'.²⁷ The high volume of this military-themed material available in Belfast corroborates this and suggests a potentially lively market of enthusiastic readers.

The third type of Volunteer texts comprised political tracts and pamphlets corresponding to the politicization of the movement and its campaign for political reform. A range of issues were debated in these texts, including the removal of trade restrictions, the relaxation of penal laws, the role of Catholics in the Volunteer movement, the desire for legislative independence and parliamentary reform.²⁸ These political tracts confirmed a culture of indigenous political

26 The following publications have been retrieved from BNL advertisements. No extant copies exist, unless otherwise stated. *The Exercise of a Company of Foot, Compiled Chiefly from the Practice of the Volunteers of Belfast ... By a Member* [n.p.; n.pub., 1779] – the 2nd edn with alterations and additions available in NLI; *A Military Dictionary ... Containing every Particular of Military Knowledge Essential to a Practical Use of Arms, and Effective Service* [n.p.: n. pub., 1780]; *A Plan of the Mock Engagement of the Volunteers, near Belfast, on the 12th and 13th of July Instant. Given out by Francis Dobbs, Esq.: Commanding Officer* [Dublin (?): John Magee (?), 1780]; *A System of Military Discipline of a Corps of Infantry. In Three Parts. Parts. I. Of the Use of Arms. II. Of Manoeuvres. III. Of the Duty of Volunteer Officers, &c. With Plates Explanatory of the Manoeuvres. By a Derry Volunteer* [n.p.: n. pub., 1780]; *Plan of Review, for the Volunteer Corps, which are to Assemble at Belfast, in July, 1781* [Belfast (?): n.pub., 1781] – copy available in NLI; *An Address from the Belfast First Volunteer Company, to the Officers and Privates of the Several Companies to be Reviewed at Belfast, 31st July, 1782* [Belfast: n. pub., 1782] – copy available in NLI. BNL, 26-29 Jan. 1779; 11-14 Apr. 1780; 21-25 Apr. 1780; 5-9 May, 1780; 4-7 July, 1780.

27 Cited in BNL, 4-7 Aug. 1778.

discourse and that people were evidently reading more than prayers and devotional works. This is suggestive of extensive reading practices, which have been associated with a maturing political climate and the downward expansion of the public sphere.²⁹

Chronologically, patriotic addresses were the first Volunteer texts to be printed. After this point the Volunteer material that was printed assumed an overtly political focus and the primacy of Magee's position as printer of Volunteer addresses was supplanted by various printers working throughout Ireland, including Henry and Robert Joy of Belfast and William Hallhead of Dublin.³⁰ No single printer however retained a monopoly on Volunteer texts at this time in the manner which Magee did in 1779-81, indicating Magee's significance as a publisher of Volunteer texts on a national stage over this two-year period.

The range of printed Volunteer material signifies the burgeoning of the movement as a political force and how print became an essential medium for the fomenting and dissemination of these ideas to the rank and file of the movement. In fact print became so integral to the Volunteers that Francis Hardy, looking back on this time in his memoirs of the Earl of Charlemont, teased out the implicit connection between the movement and literary culture in arguing that throughout the Volunteer period 'Reading ... gradually changed into a favoured, and pleasing habit' and 'unquestionably, more books were bought, and continued to be so, after the volunteer institution was formed, than ever before in Ireland.'³¹ While undoubtedly partisan and possibly guilty of embellishment, his remarks nonetheless hint at the way in which Volunteerism and literature formed an important connection, which printers such as Magee and others were responsible for forging. The democratizing potential of the Volunteer organisation, a movement which permitted men of various rank to mix together led to the

28 Frederick Jebb, *The Letters of Guatimozin, on the Affairs of Ireland* (Belfast, 1779); [Francis I.S. Conway, Viscount Beauchamp], *A Letter to the First Belfast Company of Volunteers, in the Province of Ulster* (Belfast, 1782); *A Letter to Henry Flood, Esq. on the Present State of Representation in Ireland* (Belfast, 1783); *Proceedings Relative to the Ulster Assembly of Volunteer Delegates: On the Subject of a More Equal Representation of the People in the Parliament of Ireland. To which are Annexed, Letters from the Duke of Richmond, Dr. Price, Mr. Wyvill, and Others. Published by the Committee of Correspondence* (Belfast, 1783).

29 Thomas O'Connor, 'Religious Change, 1550-1800', in Raymond Gillespie & Andrew Hadfield (eds.), *The Oxford History of the Irish Book, Volume 3: The Irish Book in English 1550-1800* (Oxford, 2006), p. 191.

30 That Magee conspicuously ceased printing Volunteer material once the movement emerged as a political force agitating for constitutional change may indicate a fragmentation between his personal and professional politics. But this is resisted by the biographical details of Magee: in 1785 he agreed that Belfast should be represented in the National Assembly of Delegates and that a representative be elected as a Member of the National Congress. Magee was a member of the New Light First Presbyterian Congregation (non-subscribing). In 1775 his name appeared as a stipend payer for a seat in the north gallery of their church. Magee contributed to the building fund of the new meeting house in 1781 and by 1790 both James and William were members of the Reverend Dr. Bruce's congregation, who was the then Minister of the First Congregation. He is likely to have been sympathetic to Volunteer political objectives. *Belfast Mercury*, 11 Jan. 1785; Francis Joseph Bigger, *The Magees of Belfast and Dublin, Printers* (Belfast, 1916), p.11.

subsequent exchange of ideas, Hardy argued, and an emphasis placed upon literary accomplishments. He contended that the impetus for knowledge led the unlearned on a programme of self-improvement through reading, which draws attention, albeit obliquely, to printers such as Magee who were central to that literary culture.³²

Hardy's notion that the Volunteers singlehandedly created an emphasis on learning and literacy is difficult to sustain, particularly in an Ulster context. In Ulster throughout the century there was a vibrant literate culture, nourished by the Presbyterian emphasis on learning and literature and confirmed by the prevalence of booksellers throughout the province.³³ Adams has documented that 'the anonymous author of *Letters between Henry and Francis* ... noted [in 1770]: "indeed they read more in the north than in the south. I have met with twenty booksellers' shops on this circuit, and there is not one from Dublin to Cork." To judge from contemporary advertisements, this was true to the extent that virtually every town had at least one shop that sold books on occasion'.³⁴ This insistence on reading was pervasive and even among artisans it became commonplace to devote time equally 'In honest toil, or with a book and friend'.³⁵ It is probable, however, the Volunteer movement did accentuate reading and the exchange of ideas, and this emphasis cut across class boundaries and occurred on a national scale that had not been witnessed previously.

Hardy's remarks thus provide a crucial understanding of the Volunteer organisation as necessarily allied with the printed word and associated with igniting an enthusiasm about reading and books that incorporated diverse social elements. The impact which the movement had upon printing in the town is revealed by the fact that Volunteer companies influenced the preaching and printing of all of Magee's Volunteer addresses and commanding officers could also generate the publication of material such as reviews and works of military instruction.³⁶ The following section examines Magee's Volunteer sermons in the

31 Francis Hardy, *Memoirs of the Political and Private Life of James Caulfield, Earl of Charlemont, Knight of St. Patrick* (London, 1810), pp. 208-209.

32 Hardy, *Memoirs of the Political and Private Life of James Caulfield*, pp. 208-209. The reality of the Volunteer makeup indicates that it is unlikely to have been as emancipated as suggested by Hardy since the movement essentially comprised members derived from the middle class and there is evidence of some corps being rigidly demarcated according to class lines. See Blackstock, 'Loyal clubs and societies in Ulster', p. 451.

33 For evidence of this vibrant print culture, see J.R.R. Adams, *The Printed Word and the Common Man: Popular Culture in Ulster, 1700-1900* (Belfast, 1987); Graeme Kirkham, 'Literacy in North-West Ulster 1680-1860' in Mary Daly & David Dickson (eds.), *The Origins of Popular Literacy in Ireland: Language Change and Educational Development 1700-1920* (Dublin, 1990), pp. 73-96; Wesley McCann, 'Patrick Neill and the Origins of Belfast Printing' in Peter Isaac (ed.), *Six Centuries of the Provincial Book Trade* (Winchester, 1990), pp. 125-138; Robert Munter, *A Dictionary of the Print Trade in Ireland 1550-1775* (New York, 1988); Idem, *The History of the Irish Newspaper 1685-1760* (London, 1967).

34 Adams, *The Printed Word and the Common Man*, p. 26.

35 James Orr, *The Posthumous Works of James Orr* (Belfast, 1817), p. 88.

period 1779-1781, which were the only Volunteer texts Magee printed. Their publication led Magee to make a vital contribution to the national book trade.

Magee's Volunteer Sermons, 1778-1781

Over this two-year period Magee printed a total of seven Volunteer addresses. These were addresses which had been preached variously in the counties of Antrim, Down or Londonderry. All printed addresses retailed in Belfast and some were also distributed in the smaller towns of Ulster by means of provincial booksellers. This is in addition to Dublin where John Magee, bookseller and proprietor of the *Dublin Evening Post*, sold Volunteer addresses 'lately published' by his father.³⁷

The seven addresses which can be confirmed as Magee's Volunteer publications are listed as follows with their short-titles: Joseph Chambers' *What Circumstances Render a War Compatible with Christianity* (1779), James Crombie's *The Expedience and Utility of Volunteer Associations* (1779), William Steel Dickson's *The Propriety and Advantages of Acquiring the Knowledge and Use of Arms* (1779), William D. Nevin's *The Nature and Evidence of an Over-Ruling Providence Considered* (1779), Robert Sinclair's *Fortitude Explained and Recommended* (1779), John Bell's *Righteousness the Best Friend of Bravery* (1780) and James Crombie's *The Propriety of Setting Apart a Portion of the Sabbath for the Purpose of Acquiring the Knowledge and Use of Arms* (1781).³⁸

The greater preponderance of these addresses occurred between May 1779 and February 1780, with one final address printed in 1781. It was during this exceptional ten month period that Magee capitalised on the enthusiasm for Volunteering, at a time when the 'spirit-stirring drum was heard through every province'.³⁹ While Magee's publishing strengths throughout his career had consistently included sermon printing – he printed sixty-one sermons, 1735-1789, of which number, thirty-two publications were local sermons – the Volunteer sermons were exceptionally significant. To place them in context, Magee's Volunteer sermons, occurring within an extremely narrow timeframe, constituted more than one fifth of his total output of local sermons. This was a unique moment in eighteenth-century Belfast publishing; indigenous sermons were published with a frequency, popularity and exigency that would never again be witnessed in the century.

All seven addresses were first-time publications. This was especially historic since Belfast printing for most of the century engaged in the reprinting of texts which had first been printed in London or, to a lesser extent, Scotland. Now,

36 BNL, 11-12 Apr. 1780.

37 Mary Pollard, *A Dictionary of Members of the Dublin Book Trade 1550-1800* (London, 2000), p. 390.

38 For complete publication details of these addresses, including full titles and retail distribution, see Appendix.

39 Hardy, *Memoirs of the Political and Private Life of James Caulfield*, p. 380.

Belfast printing was responsible for original publication and began acting as a locus of influence for print in other outlying regions that imitated the example. At least eighteen Volunteer sermons were published in Ireland (1779-1781), but Belfast was the chief publishing centre for this material. Eight Volunteer sermons were printed in Belfast (seven printed by Magee); four sermons were printed in Strabane; three were printed in Newry; one was Edinburgh printed, yet was preached in Ulster; and three were printed in Dublin. Witherow moreover records three further Volunteer sermons although it is not apparent if they were published or not. McBride notes that 'many more [sermons] were recorded in the pages of the provincial press,' therefore it can be assumed that the figure 'represents only a tiny proportion of those actually preached'.⁴⁰ Since more Volunteer addresses were printed in Belfast than in any other town or city in Ireland Magee's publication of these sermons therefore was a significant moment in his career. This is not simply owing to the national importance he assumed as the foremost printer of Volunteer addresses throughout the country, but also because by his printing of this material there was a conspicuous move towards original publications.

The frequency of these sermons is one indication of their topicality, as well as their undoubted commercial appeal. It is important to bear in mind that once titles were printed, books had to be stored and then transported for sale. Failure to sell a print run tied up capital for long periods of time which printers and booksellers could ill afford; moreover, it discouraged further investment in other projects.⁴¹ The undoubted success of Magee's Volunteer sermons is therefore suggested by the haste with which they were published and the extraordinary level of interest in the material during this time. The high output of Magee's presses in this period also suggests that Magee had available capital to invest in other publications, which would not be possible if works – the Volunteer addresses especially – were unpopular or took long to sell. To demonstrate the point, Magee printed an average of 8.6 titles per year throughout his career; throughout the years however in which Volunteering was at its most popular in Belfast 1778-1782, Magee's printed output rose to an average of 12.75 titles per year. These were years when Magee's presses were more than usually productive. In fact, in 1779 when Magee printed 5 of his total number of 7 Volunteer sermons, his presses groaned with activity: 1779 was the second most productive year of his career in which he printed an impressive 19 works. From this it can be extrapolated that Magee's finances were exceptionally healthy at this time. It is apparent that he had a more-than-usual excess of capital which he used to invest in multiple publications.

I would like to posit that this excess of capital derived in part from the Volunteer addresses, which were printed at the request of congregations, before whom the addresses were delivered. With only one exception, each of his Volunteer sermons declared that they were printed because of congregation-led

⁴⁰ McBride, *Scripture Politics*, p. 127.

⁴¹ Raymond Gillespie, *Reading Ireland: Print, Reading and Social Change in Early Modern Ireland* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 57, 84.

demand.⁴² Each sermon bore on the imprint that they had been published at the congregation's 'REQUEST' or 'DESIRE'. In including this phrase Magee was acknowledging those who had made the printed work a reality, possibly suggesting the financial nature of their contribution.⁴³ The form of words might be compared to 'printed for the author' and variants in which case those person/s desiring the publication of a work, while also desiring anonymity, could hide behind this label of convenience. For the main part, a large percentage of a publishing bookseller's work was for private clients, in effect who paid for the job, something which is disguised in too many accounts.⁴⁴

That congregations were flagged up as agents of publication – whether they were responsible for financing publications costs or not – is likely to have been advantageous for Magee. By insisting that ministers and congregations could influence and actually prompt the publication of an address, readers were encouraged into a centrally important place in the publication process. Magee's advertisements in the *Belfast News-Letter* moreover broadcast the congregation-led dynamic of these texts to an impressive readership of thousands throughout Ulster.⁴⁵ This encouraged other congregations, in towns such as Strabane and Newry, to imitate this example in requesting the publication of patriotic addresses.

This reveals the impact which Magee's sermons had upon the Ulster hinterland and those towns that were removed geographically and, perhaps to a lesser extent, culturally from Belfast as a centre of Volunteerism. His sermons were able to achieve this discernible impact also because Magee distributed them outside of the normal distribution radius of Belfast, including towns such as Coleraine, Lisburn, Downpatrick and Drumbridge. At this time, Magee retailed only the most widespread commercially appealing publications outside of Belfast in the smaller towns – for example, devotional works, almanac publications or General Synod addresses. This signifies the commercial potential of the Volunteer sermons and their popularity across the province.

All Magee's Volunteer sermons were printed within a 5-6 week period from their delivery. In some cases the decision to have the address printed occurred within a few days of the sermon's delivery, suggesting the immediacy of the material.⁴⁶ The texts were also printed in octavo format, comprised less than forty-eight pages and there is no evidence that they were sold bound in hard

42 The exception was Chambers' *What Circumstances Render a War Compatible with Christianity* (1779).

43 Of the sixty-one sermons that Magee printed in his career ten were printed at the request of congregations: six of these were Volunteer sermons.

44 I am indebted to Professor James Raven for his suggestion here.

45 From 1789 to 1794 the *BNL* boasted that it had circulation figures ranging between 2,050 and 3,225 per issue over the nine counties of Ulster with an estimated readership of 18,000 for each issue. These figures however did not include its sale in different parts of Ireland and Britain. Adams, *The Printed Word and the Common Man*, p. 36; Munter, *The History of the Irish Newspaper 1685- 1760*, p. 88.

boards but were likely to have been sold with stitched bindings. Such features were entirely typical of the greater preponderance of Magee's printed texts.

The sermons each sold for 6½d., the standard price that was charged for sermons, plays and most pamphlets in the Belfast trade. The sermons were not the cheapest items Magee printed, but they were eminently affordable and were a great deal less expensive than novels, multi-volume works, or prestigious editions. Since the price had implications for the kinds of reader who could purchase the text, these patriotic addresses may have targeted an especially bourgeois readership. This is perhaps suggested also by the provenance of these sermons.⁴⁷ In addition, this is further strengthened by the lack of advertisement leaves in the sermons. Adams' analysis of printed material in eighteenth-century Ulster indicates that Magee utilised advertising in those publications which were likely to have a wide readership base.⁴⁸ The absence of advertising therefore in Magee's Volunteer sermons suggests that these works, popular as they undoubtedly were, nonetheless may not have had such a wide social appeal as other publications – chapmen's books, devotional works, plays and farces – which had a more varied and extensive readership. This is consonant with the essentially middle-class composition of the Volunteers: Patrick Morgan deemed the Volunteers as 'all men of business who lose at least half their time in learning the use of arms' and Henry Grattan famously described the movement as 'the armed property of the nation'.⁴⁹ In Ulster the Volunteers were comprised mainly of middle-class Dissenters, many of whom were engaged in commerce and were dominant in the life of their towns by virtue of their social and economic standing. It is apparent that it is they who influenced the publication of Volunteer addresses and who are likely to have bought and read the printed sermons.

The sermons themselves were diverse, though highly stylized texts, functioning as patriotic addresses and political sermons and capable of encompassing a wide range of sentiments. They sought to allay fears and anxieties, offer consolation to

46 In March 1779 Dickson penned a dedication for the publication of the sermon he delivered to the Echlinville Volunteers. It was dated seven days after he preached the address. William Steel Dickson, *A Sermon, on the Propriety and Advantages of Acquiring the Knowledge and Uses of Arms* (1779), [p.ii].

47 For example, the signature of Thomas Knox Magee (and date of 10 Nov. [17]79[?]) is inscribed on a copy of Nevin's *The Nature and Evidence of an Over-ruling Providence Considered* (1779), held by Cambridge University Library. This copy is available on ECCO. Knox Magee is listed in Wilson's *Directory* for 1791 and 1792 under 'Collectors of the Revenue' as an 'Excise Surveyor' in Strabane, later Lisburn. *The Treble Almanack for the Year MDCCXCI* (Dublin, [1791]), p. 69; *The Treble Almanack for the year MDCCXCII* (Dublin, [1792]), p. 69. William Steel Dickson also inscribed a copy of his printed address – *A Sermon, on the Propriety and Advantages of Acquiring the Knowledge and Use of Arms* (1779) – to George Jardine who was Professor of Logic and Rhetoric at the University of Glasgow University, 1774-1827. This undated inscription is on the copy held by the National Library of Ireland, which is also available on ECCO. While neither of these examples can be regarded as thoroughly representative, nonetheless both are hardly indicative of an especially plebeian readership of Volunteer sermons.

48 Adams, *The Printed Word and the Common Man*, p. 17.

49 Morgan cited in *The Volunteers, 1778-84*, Education Facsimiles, 14-160 (Belfast, 1974). Grattan cited in Blackstock, *Double Traitors?*, p. 3.

their audience, as well as practical guidelines in which Volunteer behaviour became increasingly codified.⁵⁰ They appealed to family and religion in which the defence of the family unity and the Protestant religion were flagged up as the purpose of Volunteer associations, and consequently they betrayed evidence of anti-papal rhetoric.⁵¹ In fact these sermons formed part of an established tradition of Protestant homiletic literature in which political anxieties and threats to security were articulated and deliverance became both a central trope, as well as an ambition for the future. In this respect, the Volunteer sermons can be regarded as heirs to a tradition of sermon literature including annual political sermons of Protestant Ireland – for example, those marking the 1641 rebellion – and the American Jeremiad whose purpose was to ‘direct an imperiled people of God toward the fulfillment of their destiny, to guide them individually toward salvation, and collectively toward the American city of God.’⁵² The Volunteer sermons also are part of a distinct genre of eighteenth-century crisis sermons in Ulster Presbyterianism which arose because of foreign threats to the established order – for example, the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745, the ‘imperial crisis’ of 1775-82 and the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. But if deliverance was a core element of the above mentioned sermons the Volunteer addresses were markedly different from their sermon progenitors in terms of the redemptive paradigm. Deliverance would not come about through proselytizing and redoubling efforts at religious reformation as in the case of Irish Protestant sermons celebrating 1641, or through piety and providence as recounted in Jeremiads in New England, or even the result of national fasting and thanksgiving commonly witnessed in political sermons of the Revolutionary War.⁵³ In Volunteer addresses deliverance would only be accomplished through political activity in the form of military mobilization and a pragmatic patriotism. As James Crombie asserted in *A Sermon on the Love of Country* (1778), ‘When competitions arise, the interests of country are to take the lead; and though the regard we pay to them will not justify an infringement upon the rights of others, yet it calls upon us to assert, and vindicate our own’.⁵⁴ In other words, political activism and providential deliverance went hand in hand, giving license to Dissenters to become political

50 For example, Crombie, *The Propriety of Setting Apart a Portion of the Sabbath for the Purpose of Acquiring the Knowledge and Use of Arms*, p. 36.

51 Sinclair, *Fortitude Explained and Recommended*, pp. 3-4, 25-26; Nevin, *The Nature and Evidence of an Over-Ruling Providence Considered*, pp. 15-19; Crombie, *The Expedience and Utility of Volunteer Associations*, pp. 5, 22-25; Chambers, *What Circumstances Render a War Compatible with Christianity*, pp. 23-24. See also, William Crawford, *The Nature and Happy Effects of Civil Liberty Considered* (Strabane, 1780), pp. 24-26.

52 T.C. Barnard, ‘The Uses of 23 October 1641 and Irish Protestant Celebrations’, *English Historical Review*, 106, no. 421 (Oct., 1991), pp. 889-921; Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Wisconsin, 1978), p. 9. For a fuller discussion of the sermon genre in this period see Joris van Eijnatten, *Preaching, Sermon and Cultural Change in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Leiden and Boston, 2009).

53 Barnard, ‘The Uses of 23 October 1641 and Irish Protestant Celebrations’, p. 891; Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*, pp. 3-30.

citizens. Blackstock notes: 'providence intervened in the volunteering of citizens for whom "national defence was interwoven with self-preservation" dignifying resistance "with the venerable name of PATRIOTISM"',⁵⁵

Magee's sermons mapped the Volunteers' task of defence onto a Protestant lineage that had persistently and effectively repelled threats to the established order from the Catholic faith. The signposting by ministers such as James Crombie of the invasion threat in terms suggestive of a religious crusade – a Protestant war against Catholicism – fed into the anti-papal rhetoric common in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which regarded Catholicism as unscrupulous and scheming.⁵⁶ Consequently the Volunteer sermons were sprinkled liberally with allusions to events such as the Boyne, Siege of Derry, Enniskillen, or moments of Protestant victory over papal machinations – the accession of the house of Hanover, or the defeat of the Jacobite plots of 1715 and 1745 to create a catalogue of Protestant successes.⁵⁷ Like the Protestant sermons celebrating 1641, the Volunteer sermons therefore drew upon an established tradition to express a 'continuum of Protestant history'.⁵⁸ This ostensible celebration of British Protestantism in Volunteer addresses – in addition to a circumspect reverence of the British Constitution – went hand in hand however with Dissenters recognising and celebrating their Irish identity. Higgins notes: 'many Irish Protestants saw little contradiction in identifying themselves as "Irishmen" in a consciously anti-English manner while also strongly celebrating the British Empire and the monarchy. The commemoration of King William III, a decidedly Protestant hero but one closely identified with Whig notions of liberty, allowed the Volunteers in spectacular fashion to identify their own cause with this tradition.'⁵⁹ This is consonant with Mac Suibhne who, in his regional study of the Volunteers in northwest Ulster, has countered revisionist accounts of Volunteers by contending that the movement offered a 'clear articulation of an Irish national identity'.⁶⁰ The Volunteer sermons were therefore seminal for the articulation – albeit understated and possibly even oblique – of Dissenters' political aspirations for Ireland.⁶¹

The influence of civic humanism was evident also in these sermons in which luxury was decried and citizen armies were represented as the best defence

54 Crombie, *A Sermon on the Love of Country*, p. 13.

55 Blackstock, 'Armed Citizens and Christian Soldiers', p. 95.

56 Crombie, *The Expedience and Utility of Volunteer Associations*, p. 5.

57 For example, see Nevin, *The Nature and Evidence of an Over-ruling Providence Considered*, pp. 16-21. Also, see William Crawford, *The Connection betwixt Courage and the Moral Virtues Considered* (Strabane, 1779), pp. 17-18.

58 Barnard, 'The Uses of 23 October 1641 and Irish Protestant Celebrations', p. 894.

59 Higgins, *A Nation of Politicians: Gender, Patriotism, and Political Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, p. 81.

60 Mac Suibhne, 'Whiskey, Potatoes and Paddies', p. 48.

61 It is outside of the scope of this article to discuss in any detail the Volunteer sermons as articulating an Irish identity and constructing a coherent sense of national self. For further information on this subject, see Mac Suibhne, 'Whiskey, Potatoes and Paddies', pp. 45-82.

against the dissolution of liberty in the state.⁶² Learning the military arts and use of arms were also extolled as expedient and patriotic, essential for securing freedom and remedying effeminacy and vice.⁶³ Throughout these patriotic addresses the passions were consistently portrayed as offending against community because of their association with selfish individualism.⁶⁴ This derived from a traditional Christian context of sin, but was refigured through the lens of civic humanism in which the 'dissocial passions' offended against community because they caused injury to the flourishing of civic virtue.⁶⁵ The stress on the inherent justifiability of the Volunteer corps was a pattern repeated throughout Magee's Volunteer texts also, indicating Dissenter nervousness about moving into the public sphere.⁶⁶ Equally too there was a fulsome celebration of the Volunteers as heroic, unselfish and fundamentally patriotic.⁶⁷

Addresses which did not adhere to this schema, or failed significantly to meet the required brief – particularly with regard to the appropriate degree of eulogistic fervour – failed to get printed. This is unsurprising, especially if Volunteer congregations were responsible for financing sermons. A case in point is the Rev. James Bryson who preached a Volunteer sermon on two separate occasions before assembled volunteer companies: the Belfast Union of Volunteers (Nov. 1778) and Lisburn Volunteers (Oct. 1779). Despite two different audiences, this address was never printed; almost certainly attributable to the scant laudatory content provided on the Volunteers. His foregrounding of the lack of national piety essentially created a Jeremiad in which he recommended 'Piety and publick spirit' as 'the most effectual means of preservation against every foe' and cautioned the Volunteers that 'no regard to military objects ... may abate your piety, slacken your industry, or lead you astray from pure and sober manners'.⁶⁸ In failing to provide the usual bombastic congratulation and laudatory encomium to the assembled Volunteers, Bryson's address was consigned to the pulpit only. This reveals the central role which congregations played in the publication (or not) of Volunteer sermons; it sharply

62 Dickson, *A Sermon on the Propriety and Advantages of Acquiring the Knowledge and Use of Arms*, pp. 12-14; Crombie, *The Expedience and Utility of Volunteer Associations*, pp. 10-11, 17-18; Sinclair, *Fortitude Explained and Recommended*, pp. 25-26. See also, Andrew Alexander, *The Advantages of a General Knowledge of the Use of Arms* (Strabane, 1779), pp. 15-17.

63 Dickson, *A Sermon on the Propriety and Advantages of Acquiring the Knowledge and Use of Arms*, pp. 11-18; Crombie, *The Expedience and Utility of Volunteer Associations*, pp. 16-17. See also Samuel Barber, *A Sermon, Delivered in the Meeting-House of Rathfriland, October 24, 1779, to the Castlewella Rangers, and Rathfriland Volunteers* (Newry, 1779), pp. 4-8.

64 Sinclair, *Fortitude Explained and Recommended*, pp. 7-11.

65 Crawford, *The Nature and Happy Effects of Civil Liberty Considered*, p. 8.

66 Sinclair, *Fortitude Explained and Recommended*, pp. 20-21, 26; Dickson, *The Propriety and Advantages of Acquiring the Knowledge and Use of Arms*, pp. 29-30.

67 Dickson, *The Propriety of Setting Apart a Portion of the Sabbath for the Purpose of Acquiring the Knowledge and Use of Arms*, pp. 21-22; Chambers, *What Circumstances Render a War Compatible with Christianity*, p. 27.

68 James Bryson, MS sermon dated 15 Nov. 1778 & 17 Oct. 1779; McClay Library, Queen's University Belfast, Bryson MS sermons, vol. 6, pp. 14, 38.

delineates their expectations regarding 'worthy' and 'publishable' material, as well as indicating that Volunteer congregations insisted upon ministers who were fulsome advocates of the movement.⁶⁹ Most of all, it makes evident the self-assurance of Dissenters who utilised Volunteer addresses as a means of legitimising the movement, expressing their political aspirations and consolidating their new-found importance. Ministers who engaged with this dynamic in Volunteer addresses were consigned to print; those who did not were not published.

Dissenting Confidence and Controversy in Magee's Volunteer Sermons

If the printing and sale of Magee's Volunteer sermons revealed the growing confidence of the Dissenting community, this self-assurance was foremost in controversial addresses given by specific New Light ministers, controversy that Magee marketed in terms of the retail distribution of texts.

New Lights or non-subscribers were those Dissenters who did not sign up to the articles of faith contained in the Westminster Confession, which, drawn up in 1643, was the principal document for adherents of the Scottish kirk, and all those who belonged to the Church of Scotland were required to subscribe to it. Since the Church of Scotland was the mother-church of the Synod of Ulster, all Ulster ministers were expected to subscribe formally to the Westminster Confession. Open to the intellectual currents of the Enlightenment, New Lights were latitudinarian in their outlook and associated with a rational Dissent which championed the individual right of judgement in opposition to church authority. This inclined them towards political liberalism: both A.T.Q. Stewart and Marianne Elliot have viewed the non-subscribers as 'carriers of classic republican ideals'.⁷⁰ New Lights were dependent upon the middle-class circles of Belfast and the towns, and they comprised the wealthier congregations who could afford to finance publications, which they did in the case of Magee's Volunteer sermons.⁷¹ New Lights were well represented in terms of printed output throughout the century, unsurprising given their wealth and the fact that the principal printing firms of Belfast belonged to New Light congregations: the Magee, Blow and Hay families were all members of the First Congregation (non-subscribing).⁷² New Lights played a conspicuous role in philanthropic organisations also – for example the establishment of the Belfast Charitable Society in 1752 – but compared to their growing affluence and

69 Often ministers were not simply strong advocates of the movement but acted as chaplains or even officers to local companies. See William Thomas Latimer, *A History of Irish Presbyterians*, 2nd edn (Belfast, 1902), p. 363.

70 McBride, *Scripture Politics*, 7. An excellent exposition of New Lights is given in McBride, *Scripture Politics*, pp. 41-61; See also R. Finlay Holmes, 'The Reverend John Abernethy: The Challenge of New Light Theology to Traditional Irish Presbyterian Calvinism' in Kevin Herlihy (ed.), *The Religion of Dissent 1650-1800* (Dublin, 1996), pp.100-111; Latimer, *A History of Irish Presbyterians*, ch. 28.

71 McBride, *Scripture Politics*, p. 9.

72 Of the 86 Dissenting ministers in Ireland who published sermons during the eighteenth century, 41 can be classified as New Light. McBride, *Scripture Politics*, p. 57; Bigger, *The Magees of*

involvement in the corporate life of the town, they had little say in county and borough politics which made them more likely to be critical of existing political structures, criticisms which were voiced in Volunteer addresses.⁷³

One of the main criticisms by New Light ministers in Ulster Volunteer sermons was the exclusion of Catholics from the ranks of the Volunteers.⁷⁴ And a few New Light clergymen 'made favourable overtures towards their disenfranchised countrymen'.⁷⁵ Samuel Barber in a Volunteer address in October 1779 had explicitly bemoaned the penal laws as trespassing against the right of individual conscience and called for unity with Catholics: 'let us arm, and be prepared for the worst that can happen, to defend ourselves, to protect the Roman Catholics, or even to join with them in a common cause.'⁷⁶ One particularly controversial address which broached the issue of volunteering was William Steel Dickson's *Sermon on the Propriety and Advantages of Acquiring the Knowledge and Use of Arms* which was preached before the Echlinville Volunteers on Sunday 28 March 1779. Dickson's expression of pro-Catholic sentiment that derived from his fervent New Light beliefs provoked widespread agitation. Dickson grieved that Catholics were offering themselves throughout the country as Volunteers but that 'their offers were rejected, and, in some places, not without insult' and he pointed out for the 'impolicy and danger of such conduct'.⁷⁷ His sympathetic position was too forward-thinking for the movement to embrace at this early stage for a more tolerant Volunteer policy towards Catholics only began to emerge around 1782 when certain corps relaxed their rules about Protestant membership and when the Volunteers of Ulster resolved in favour of relaxing some of the penal laws. Not all companies however concurred with this reformist political outlook, giving strength to Ó Snodaigh's contention that the Volunteers emphasized Protestant solidarity and acted primarily as instruments of social control, especially against Catholics.⁷⁸

In his autobiography Dickson hinted at the furore his comments provoked in

Belfast and Dublin, p. 11; *Historic Memorials of the First Presbyterian Church of Belfast: Prepared in Connection with the Centennial of its Present Meeting-house* (Belfast and New York, 1887), pp. 58, 59, 62, 63, [p.97]-101.

- 73 In total Magee printed six authors (seven texts) of Volunteer addresses, two of whom were confirmed New Lights (Dickson and Crombie – three texts in total), two who may be regarded as possible New Lights (Nevin and Chambers) and two whose position I have been unable to ascertain (Sinclair and Bell).
- 74 See William Steel Dickson, *A Sermon on the Propriety and Advantages of Acquiring the Knowledge and Use of Arms*, p. 25; Samuel Barber, *A Sermon, Delivered in the Meeting-House of Rathfriland, October 24, 1779*, p. 9.
- 75 I.R. McBride, "'When Ulster Joined Ireland": Anti-Popery, Presbyterian Radicalism and Irish Republicanism in the 1790s', *Past & Present*, 157 (Nov. 1997), p. 157.
- 76 Samuel Barber, *A Sermon, Delivered in the Meeting-House of Rathfriland, October 24, 1779, to the Castlewellan Rangers, and Rathfriland Volunteers* (Newry, 1779), p. 9.
- 77 Dickson, *A Narrative of the Confinement and Exile of William Steel Dickson, D.D. Formerly Minister of the Presbyterian Congregations of Ballyhalbert and Portaferry, in the County of Down, and Now of Keady, in the County of Armagh* (Dublin, 1812), p. 10.

which he 'offend[ed] all the Protestant and Presbyterian bigots in the country' and in a bid to pacify the community, whose ire he had aroused, he reluctantly qualified the offending passage when the work came to be published.⁷⁹ In the revised passage, he suggested that moves should be made to make Catholics feel less mistrustful, in this way gesturing at the inclusion of Catholics into Volunteer ranks, but refraining from explicitly voicing this desire.⁸⁰

In publishing Dickson's address, Magee was therefore printing material which was extremely contentious for its political sentiment that jarred with conservative Protestants and Old Light Dissenters.⁸¹ This was a pattern to be repeated in Magee's final Volunteer address in 1781 in which Old Lights were again antagonised by the progressivism of New Light philosophy. This sermon was James Crombie's *The Propriety of Setting Apart a Portion of the Sabbath for the Purpose of Acquiring the Knowledge and Use of Arms* which was preached before the Belfast Volunteer Company on Sunday 4 March in the Old Dissenting Meeting-House.⁸² The sermon was most notable for its challenge to Sabbath doctrine in which Crombie infuriated Old Lights in arguing that military practice and training were compatible with the law of the Sabbath and that the observance of religious practice should be more responsive to the social landscape.⁸³ This stood as a direct challenge to the strict observance of the Sabbath and the prescriptivism of subscribers and gave rise to a printed rejoinder by Sinclair Kelburn of the Third Congregation (Old Lights), and thus becoming the only Volunteer address in Ireland to provoke a riposte in print.⁸⁴

The retail distribution of these two addresses reveals that as the most controversial of Magee's Volunteers sermons, they were given wider distribution than any other of his Volunteer sermons. They retailed beyond the confines of

78 Jacqueline Hill, 'Loyal societies in Ireland, 1690-1790', in Kelly & Powell (eds.), *Clubs and Societies in Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, p. 200; Ó Snodaigh, 'Some Police and Military Aspects of the Irish Volunteers', p. 229. For more analysis, see Smyth, 'The Volunteer Movement in Ulster'; A.T.Q. Stewart, *A Deeper Silence: The Hidden Origins of the United Irishmen* (London, 1993), ch. 18; Patrick Rogers, *The Irish Volunteers and Catholic Emancipation (1778-1793): A Neglected Phase of Ireland's History* (London, 1934).

79 Dickson, *A Narrative of the Confinement and Exile of William Steel Dickson*, pp. 10-11.

80 Dickson, *A Sermon on the Propriety and Advantages of Acquiring the Knowledge and Use of Arms*, p. 25.

81 A sermon given by John Rogers in June 1780 may be regarded as more representative of Old Light philosophy in terms of its overt anti-papal bias. John Rogers, *A Sermon Preached at Lisnavein, Otherwise Ballybay New Erection, on Saturday, June 10 1780. To the Lisnavein Independent Rangers, Trough Volunteers, Lisuney Volunteers, and Monaghan Rangers* (Edinburgh, 1780), pp. 17-25, 36-37.

82 Crombie was an enthusiastic devotee of the Volunteers and preached before the Belfast companies in 1778, 1779, and 1781.

83 Crombie, *The Propriety of Setting Apart a Portion of the Sabbath for the Purpose of Acquiring the Knowledge and Use of Arms*, pp. 24-25.

84 Sinclair Kelburn, *The Morality of the Sabbath Defended. A Sermon Preached in the Third Meeting-House in Belfast* (Belfast, 1781). Kelburn was an advocate for the Volunteer cause, though his doctrinal conservatism made him feel that the Sabbath law could not be breached through Volunteering on that day. In the riposte he upheld the sanctity and necessity of keeping Sabbath

Belfast and its immediate environs. The elaborate distribution of Dickson's address especially, which sold in four towns, including Belfast, suggests, rather unsurprisingly, that Magee was harnessing its controversy.⁸⁵ In addition, it is tempting to posit that Magee was actually targeting towns and potential readers receptive to New Light philosophy since, outside of Belfast, Crombie and Dickson's sermons retailed in towns such as Derry, which contained vibrant New Light congregations.⁸⁶

Two significant points can be understood by this. Firstly, addresses preached by New Light ministers were among the most polemical of all Volunteer sermons in which challenges to the status quo were offered and New Light ministers cast a diagnostic eye on government and state. For example, James Crombie in *The Expedience and Utility of Volunteer Associations* boldly lamented 'the want of that wisdom, which ought to have formed, and guided our public councils' and that 'In place of retrieving our affairs, they continued still more to embarrass, and perplex'.⁸⁷ Robert Sinclair, in a moment of greater trenchant censure, bemoaned that 'OUR constitution of government ... is now in a consumptive state, and that noxious vermin are feeding and fattening upon its discharged humours'.⁸⁸ This lament was echoed by Dickson who grieved that the 'Benches of the House ... groan under a cumbrous Load of Mutes, and nominal Representatives' who cannot 'publickly express a few Sentences without degenerating into Nonsense, or Absurdity'. Buoyed by the patriotic 'Spirit which begins to rouse its Protestant Inhabitants', he further rejoiced that the desire of Dissenters to actively engage in political participation through Volunteering 'is not owing to the Policy or Influence of Statesmen, but rises spontaneous in the Breasts of a generous, tho' neglected People'.⁸⁹

This was undoubtedly a transformative moment for Dissenters in which their clergymen (New Lights especially) drew themselves assuredly into political debates in these addresses and voiced criticisms – couched or caustic – of Parliament and government as ineffective, even corrupt. In these moments of polemic, clergymen declared their evident frustration at a political system in need of change and improvement and juxtaposed the deficiencies of government with the patriotic spirit burning brightly in the hearts of a disenfranchised people who

observance in accordance with the law, thereby embodying the doctrinal orthodoxy of the subscribing community. See Thomas Witherow, *Historical and Literary Memorials of Presbyterianism in Ireland, Second Series: 1731-1800* (London and Belfast, 1880), pp. 213, 243-244; also, for the context to the sermon see Blackstock, 'Armed Citizens and Christian Soldiers', pp. 93-94. The absence of a printer's name on the published sermon was probably deliberate, indicating that the printer did not wish to be publicly associated with material that criticised or impinged upon Volunteer practises.

85 See Appendix for further details of the retail distribution of these addresses.

86 McBride, *Scripture Politics*, p. 58.

87 Crombie, *The Expedience and Utility of Volunteer Associations*, p. 12.

88 Sinclair, *Fortitude Explained and Recommended*, p. 23.

89 Dickson, *A Sermon, on the Propriety and Advantages of Acquiring the Knowledge and Uses of Arms*, pp. 16, 19-20.

were now enthusiastically engaged in mass politicization. In doing so, Dissenters were drawing attention to the active role they could – and wished to – inhabit in the political life of Ireland, then and in the future.

The political ambitions of Dissenters, it must be noted, occurred at a moment when some of the restrictions which faced Dissenters were removed, signalling an opportunity for them to engage actively in civic life.⁹⁰ Magee's Volunteer sermons therefore testified to their rising assurance and the existence of a political culture in which they were centrally involved. A second significant point is that the marketing and distribution of Magee's Volunteer sermons beyond the confines of Belfast – particularly in the cases of the more divisive addresses – gave example to smaller, wealthier towns, particularly those with New Light congregations, who quickly emulated publication practises in Belfast through the printing and sale of their own Volunteer sermons. And this had a discernible impact upon town printing in Ulster.

Impacting upon Printing in Ulster

As the centre of the Volunteer movement in Ireland, Belfast became a metropolis in its own right and the smaller towns became its satellites. Patterns established in Belfast were soon imitated by these towns; such patterns included the establishment of Volunteer companies and the preaching of patriotic sermons. Also, influenced by the example of Belfast printers, booksellers in Newry and Strabane engaged first in the publication of Volunteer addresses which was subsequently followed by the printing of more overtly political material. This was in part driven by a local readership seeking indigenous publications concerning home affairs. Small town printing accordingly was actually stimulated at this time. In some cases the printing of Volunteer addresses actually commenced the beginning of book printing in Ulster towns. The town of Strabane serves as a very useful case study in this regard.

Printing in Strabane first began with newspaper production. This was the *Strabane Journal* which was first issued in May 1771.⁹¹ In this respect, Strabane was fairly typical of most Irish towns in that newspaper printing occurred prior to book production.⁹² Volunteer sermons however were the first pamphlets to be printed in the town, 1779-1780.⁹³ The Volunteer sermons printed in Strabane were preached by three ministers, two of whom had connections with Magee. These were New Lights, Alexander Andrew and William Crawford.⁹⁴ Both

90 For example, the Sacramental Test was abolished in 1780 and further concessions followed in 1782 with the first recognition of Presbyterian marriages. McBride, *Scripture Politics*, p. 126.

91 Ernest Reginald McClinton Dix, *List of Books and Pamphlets Printed in Strabane in the Eighteenth Century*, 2nd edn (Dundrum, 1908), p. 5; Jack Gamble, 'A Literary History of Strabane' in John Dooher & Michael Kennedy (eds.), *The Fair River Valley: Strabane through the Ages* (Belfast, 2000), p. 252.

92 W.G. Wheeler, 'The Spread of Provincial Printing in Ireland up to 1850', *Irish Booklore*, 4 (1978), pp. 8-9.

ministers had authored material which was printed by Magee in the 1770s and these publications retailed in Belfast and Strabane.⁹⁵ Despite these contemporaneous links with Magee the Volunteer sermons given by these ministers were printed in Strabane, not Belfast. This denotes the tremendous exigency for Volunteer sermons to be printed in the town where the actual address had been delivered or, at the very least, in the nearest town with available printing capabilities, indicating that it was demand from the local book-buying public that was actually accelerating the progress of printing. Printers were keen to respond to this demand and exploit regional pride. For example, the primary printer of Volunteer sermons in Strabane was James Blyth who printed three addresses in total. There is no evidence however of Blyth working in Strabane before 1779 or indeed after 1780. Blyth had worked in Derry in 1773-1777, first in partnership with George Douglas until October 1775 and thereafter on his own.⁹⁶ Imprints denote that he worked in Strabane at the peak of Volunteer enthusiasm, during a dazzling moment when, as James Hamilton remarked to the Earl of Abercorn, 'the town now begins to stir'.⁹⁷

The absence of book production in a town which possessed a not inconsiderable degree of wealth and politically literate readers, it appears, proved an irresistible prospect for Blyth who soon set up trade there. Proof of the town's salient book printing capabilities and ambitions were manifested in the subscription publication of William Crawford's two-volume *A History of Ireland* (1783), arguably the town's most important work of the century. The dedication to the Earl of Charlemont, ostensible leader of the Volunteers since 1781, and the designation of Crawford on the title page as 'One of the Chaplains of the FIRST TYRONE REGIMENT' makes manifest the tangible relationship between Volunteerism and print and indicates that the ardent demand for Volunteer-related texts from the public was powering printing in the town at this time.⁹⁸

The desire for town presses consequently to generate their own Volunteer publications can be regarded in part as the aspiration of towns such as Strabane to have access to print, and so indicate increasing sophistication. It also however

93 See Appendix for details.

94 McBride, *Scripture Politics*, pp. 53, 127.

95 Andrew Alexander, *The Nature, Rise, and Pernicious Effects of Religious Enthusiasm. A Sermon Preached to the Dissenting Congregation of Urney, January 7th, MDCCLXX. And in London-Derry, February 25th, MDCCLXX* (Belfast, 1771); Idem, *The Gradual Increase and Progress of Religious Knowledge, Obstructions to it, and Means of Removing Them. A Sermon Preached before a General Synod of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers in Ulster, at their Annual Meeting in Lurgan, June 30th, 1772* (Belfast, 1772); William Crawford, *Dissertations on Natural Theology. By John Alphonso Turretine, . . . Translated into English by William Crawford, A.M.* Vols. 1 & 2 (Belfast, 1777 & 1778).

96 Munter, *A Dictionary of the Print Trade in Ireland 1550-1775*, p. 30; E.R. McClinton Dix, 'Irish Printers, Booksellers, and Stationers, 1726-1775' in H.R. Plomer, G.H. Bushnell & E.R. McC. Dix eds. *A Dictionary of the Printers and Booksellers who were at Work in England Scotland and Ireland from 1726 to 1775* (Oxford, 1932), p. 376.

97 James Hamilton to Earl of Abercorn, 19 July 1778, PRONI T/2541/1A/2/241.

98 It contained a subscription list of over 1,000 subscribers of Volunteers, gentlemen and traders, including interested merchants as far as Philadelphia. William Crawford, *A History of Ireland*.

ought to be contextualised in terms of a nation-wide preference, indeed insistence, for native materials, goods and services which formed part of the Volunteer campaign for free trade. In Belfast the championing of home manufacture began as early as 1778.⁹⁹ The opportunity to support, buy, even wear home manufacture at this time was an attempt to counter the commercial strictures which Irish industry faced, but also became a mark of one's patriotism at a time when love of country was the defining spirit of the nation. The demand for indigenous printed matter must be contextualised within this milieu. The publication of Volunteer sermons by Magee and other town printers must therefore be set against the promotion of local goods and services and the attempt by industry – traders, merchants, artisans and booksellers – to represent its cause to a newly patriotic public.¹⁰⁰

Equally too the publication of Volunteer sermons in places such as Strabane and Newry was owing to developments occurring in the national book trade, including emerging distribution networks and the penetration of the newspaper press throughout Ulster.¹⁰¹ For example, the ever-widening circulation of the *News-Letter* to the smaller towns established regional links with their printers and booksellers, links which Magee utilised in his retail of publications in the 1770s period. Kennedy notes: 'Readers in the remotest areas could become aware of the latest publications issued by Dublin [or Belfast] and provincial booksellers, and orders could be placed through the local newspaper office or agent'.¹⁰² Black has argued that in the English provinces the press depended for its viability on sales and advertisements and the expansion of the English provincial press was an indication of the growing wealth and sophistication of 'provincial' society.¹⁰³ In Strabane and Newry the existence of town papers and town-printed addresses, which were advertised in local newspapers, suggests communities where the commodification of literature had begun. These provincial newspapers also assisted in establishing regional print distribution across the province.

The Volunteer sermons outside of Belfast also however bore witness to the material circumstances making publication a possibility. It should be reiterated that these sermons were at the request of local congregations who could only have facilitated publication if they had the financial resources. Both Newry and

From the Earliest Period, to the Present Time. In a Series of Letters, Addressed to William Hamilton, Esq. (Strabane, 1783).

99 BNL, 15-18 Dec. 1778; 4-7 May 1779; 2-6 Apr. 1779.

100 For an example of this association between Volunteer corps, artisanal needs and the wearing only of Irish manufacture, see Martyn J. Powell, 'The Society of Free Citizens and other popular political clubs, 1749-89', in Kelly & Powell (eds.), *Clubs and Societies in Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, p. 259.

101 Adams, *The Printed Word and the Common Man*, pp. 23-41; Kirkham, 'Literacy in North-West Ulster 1680-1860', p. 87.

102 Máire Kennedy, 'Reading Print, 1700-1800' in Gillespie & Hadfield (eds.), *The Oxford History of the Irish Book, Volume 3: The Irish Book in English 1550-1800*, p. 164.

103 Jeremy Black, '"Calculated upon a Very Extensive and Useful Plane": The English Provincial Press in the Eighteenth Century' in Isaac (ed.), *Six Centuries of the Provincial Book Trade*, p. 62.

Strabane had a stipend of £100 or more – Newry’s stipend actually exceeding £200 – and were some of the wealthiest congregations in Presbyterian Ulster.¹⁰⁴ Economic considerations are paramount in the case of congregation-financed works. Wealthier congregations meant that the costs of publication could be met but also those belonging to the more affluent congregations may have been more likely to have raised regiments, as they had most to fear from the inevitable economic upheaval of a foreign attack. This provides some explanation as to why the Volunteer sermons printed at this time were preached and published in towns with New Light congregations such as Belfast, Strabane and Newry, which were more prosperous than congregations elsewhere.

Conclusion

It has been an accepted view that the spread and impact of Volunteerism, especially in Ulster, owed much to a frenetic Volunteer enthusiasm across the province. McDowell has asserted that Volunteering ‘provided an outlet for strong emotions. It gave the upper-and middle-class Irishman an opportunity of displaying his public spirit and conspicuously occupying an honourable place in the community.’¹⁰⁵ McBride has argued in this vein also, providing however a more nuanced account in which he has identified an indigenous political culture among Dissenters, their dissatisfaction with the political process and their desire to contribute meaningfully in the political arena as significant driving forces behind such Volunteer enthusiasm in the North of Ireland. Such views account for the emergence and popularity of the Volunteers as a result of core factors, such as nationalistic fervor, mounting Dissenter confidence and rising political aspirations. This however eclipses the important role which print played in the movement: how print was appropriated by Volunteer corps and how the printing of Volunteer polemics and recruitment sermons, as well as the printing of Volunteer resolutions in newspapers, and the distribution of such printed matter, was integral to mobilization of the movement nationally. Since print also was inextricably linked with Presbyterianism, most especially in a town such as Belfast, it is imperative to engage in an analysis of Volunteer print culture as a means of providing a greater understanding particularly of the intersection between the movement and Dissenters.

The Volunteer sermons of Magee in this respect are especially important. It is incontestable that these printed addresses were the result of public demand, Volunteer enthusiasm and Dissenting political confidence, making publication a reality. What has never been hitherto attended to is the fact that these sermons also owed their existence to other crucial factors: the development of the print trade, including increased print retail networks and book distribution throughout Ulster, the use of advertising in the popular press, high literacy rates among Dissenters and the wealth of New Light Dissenting congregations. This alerts us

104 McBride, *Scripture Politics*, p. 58.

105 McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution*, p. 259.

to an additional significance of Magee's Volunteers sermons, specifically their impact in terms of a history of the book. Magee's sermons, first-time printings rather than reprinted editions, saw the Belfast printer embrace original material as the heart of his corpus.¹⁰⁶ This was a key moment in his career: he became the leading printer of patriotic addresses in Ireland and his publication of these sermons helped to stimulate printing in smaller towns. His Volunteer addresses therefore ultimately signify Magee's significance as a printer, the emergent confidence of Belfast printing and, concurrently, the self-assurance of Belfast's Dissenting community in this period.

Appendix

Volunteer Sermons, 1778-1783.

1778:

August:

Crombie, James. *A Sermon on the Love of Country. Preached before the First Company of Belfast Volunteers, on Sunday, the 19th July, 1778. By the Revd. James Crombie, A.M.* [Belfast?]: [n.p.] 1778. 39, [1]p. ; 8°. Price 6½d. Sold by the Booksellers in Belfast. *BNL*, 11-14 Aug. 1778.

Magee's Volunteer Sermons, 1779-1781:

1779:

May:

Dickson, William Steel. *A Sermon on the Propriety and Advantages of Acquiring the Knowledge and Uses of Arms, in Times of Public Danger; Preached before Echlinville Volunteers, on Sunday the 28th of March, 1779; and Published at their Request; by the Revd. W.S. Dickson.* Belfast: James Magee, 1779. 29, [1]p.; 8°. Price 6½d. 'Sold by the Booksellers in Belfast; by Mr. Fulton, Coleraine: Mr. Ward, Lisburn; and Mr. Hart, Downpatrick.' *BNL*, 4-7 May 1779.

August:

Crombie, James. *The Expedience and Utility of Volunteer Associations for Natural Defence and Security in the Present Critical Situation of Public Affairs Considered, in A Sermon, Preached before the United Companies of the Belfast Volunteers, on Sunday the first of August, 1779, in the Old Dissenting Meeting-House; and Published at their Request. By James Crombie.* Belfast: James Magee, 1779. 32p.; 21cm. 8°. Price 6½d. 'Sold by the Booksellers in Belfast.' *BNL*, 20-24 Aug. 1779.

September:

106 In the years 1778-1780 Magee printed a total of forty-six texts, sixteen of which were first-time printings. That more than a third of Magee's publications in these years were first-time printings is extremely significant and this emphasis on original material indicates a marketplace in which an increasing premium was being placed upon local texts.

Sinclair, Robert. *Fortitude Explained and Recommended. A Sermon, Delivered before the Larne Volunteers, the first of August, 1779. And Published at their Request. By Robert Sinclair, A.M.* Belfast: James Magee, 1779. 28p.; 8°. Price 6½d. *BNL*, Tues Sept 7- Fri Sept 10, 1779.

October:

Nevin, William D. *The Nature and Evidence of an Over-Ruling Providence Considered. A Sermon, Preached before the Downe Volunteers, and Fuzileers, on the 5th of September, 1779. And Published at their Desire. By the Rev.d William Nevin.* Belfast: James Magee, 1779. 32p.; 8°. Price 6½d. *BNL*, 12-15 Oct. 1779. 'Sold by the Booksellers in Belfast, and by Messrs. Potter and Nevin in Downpatrick.'

November-December?

Chambers, Joseph. *What Circumstances Render a War Compatible with Christianity, and the Great Probability of Success when the Principal Persons Offer themselves Willingly Among the People, Considered. A Sermon, Preached before Some of the Field-Officers of the Battalion of Loughnashillin, and the Volunteer Company of Castledawson, on the Third of October, 1779. By the Rev. Joseph Chambers, M.A.* Belfast: James Magee, 1779. 27, [1]p.; 8°. Price 6½d. Not advertised in *BNL*.

I have been unable to date Magee's publication of Chambers' Volunteer sermon since there is no *BNL* advertisement for this text. However given that the address was delivered on 3 October 1779 and since Magee printed the Volunteer sermons within a five week period, it is likely that the work was printed in November-December 1779.

1780:

January:

John Bell, *Righteousness the Best Friend of Bravery, A Sermon Delivered in Hill-Hall Meeting-House, December fifth, MDCCLXXIX; on a Visit of Drumbridge Volunteers, and Published at their Request. By John Bell.* Belfast: James Magee: 1780. Price 6½d. *BNL*, 28 Jan.-1 Feb. 1780. 'By James Magee, at the Bible and Crown, and sold by him, and the Author, at Hill-Hall.' Also sold in Dublin by John Magee.¹⁰⁷ This text is missing from the Ulster Museum and consequently no extant copy of this work exists.

1781:

April:

Crombie, James. *The Propriety of Setting Apart a Portion of the Sabbath for the Purpose of Acquiring the Knowledge and Use of Arms, in Times of Public Danger, Illustrated. A Sermon, Preached before the Belfast Volunteer Company, on Sunday the 4th of March, 1781. In the Old Dissenting Meeting-House. And Published at their Request. By James Crombie, A.M.* Belfast: James Magee,

107 See footnote 36.

1781. 39, [1]p.; 8°. Price 6½d. *BNL*, 14-17 Apr. 1781. Retailed also outside of Belfast: Sold by George Douglas in Londonderry. *The Londonderry Journal* (hereafter *LDJ*), 19 Jun. 1781.

Volunteer Sermons Printed Outside of Belfast, 1779-1783.

James Blyth (Strabane):

1779:

October:

Crawford, William. *The Connection betwixt Courage and the Moral Virtues Considered, in a Sermon, Preached before the Volunteer Company of Strabane Rangers, on Sunday the Twelfth of September, 1779. And Published at their Desire.* By William Crawford, A.M. Strabane: James Blyth, 1779. [4], 26p.; 8°. Price 6½d. *LDJ*, 17 Oct. 1779. Sold by the bookseller George Douglas in Londonderry.

November:

Andrew, Alexander. *The Advantages of a General Knowledge of the Use of Arms, A Sermon, Preached before the Strabane, Fin-Water, and Urney Volunteers, and Strabane Rangers, in the Meeting-House of Urney, October 10, 1779. Published at their Request.* By Andrew Alexander, A.M. Strabane: James Blyth, 1779. [4], 32p.; 4°. No price stated. *LDJ*, 12 Nov. 1779. Sold by the bookseller George Douglas in Londonderry.

1780:

Crawford, William. *The Nature and Happy Effects of Civil Liberty Considered, in a Sermon Preached before Colonel Stewart Lieut. Col. Charlton, the Strabane Volunteers, Strabane Rangers, and Urney Forresters. On Sunday, the 19th of March, 1780. And Published at their Desire.* By William Crawford .A.M. One of the Chaplains of the Barony of Strabane Battalion. Strabane: James Blyth, 1780. 26p.; 8°. Price 6½d.

James M'Creery (Strabane):

1779:

Delap, Hugh. *An Inquiry, Whether and How Far, Magistracy is of a Divine Appointment, and of the Subjection Due Thereunto. A Sermon, Preached in the Old-Bridge Meeting-House Near Omagh, the 14th, of November 1779: before the Omagh and Cappagh Volunteers. Published at their Request by the Revd. Hugh Delap.* Strabane: James M'Creery, 1779. [4], 24p.; 4°.

Joseph Gordon (Newry):

1779:

Barber, Samuel. *A Sermon, Delivered in the Meeting-House of Rathfriland, October 24, 1779, to the Castlewellan Rangers, and Rathfriland Volunteers.* By Samuel Barber, M.A. Newry: Joseph Gordon, 1779. [4], 12p.; 8°.

Daniel Carpenter (Newry):**1780:**

Samuel Levingston, *The Obligation Men are Under to Exert themselves for the Defence of their Country. A Sermon Preached before the Clare Volunteers on the 9th of January, 1780.* 32p, 8°. Newry: Daniel Carpenter, 1780. 6½d.

Anonymous Newry Publications:**1780:**

James Carmichael, *The Protestant Volunteer Characterised, and the Warrantableness and Necessity of his Appearing in Arms Stated and Illustrated from Judges 5:2-9. A Sermon Preached December 21, 1779, at Donacloney, to the Volunteers of that Congregation.* Newry, [s.n.], 1780. 48p.; 12°. 6½d. No extant copy of this text exists.

D. Patterson (Edinburgh):**1780:**

Rogers, John. *A Sermon Preached at Lisnavein, Otherwise Ballybay New Erection, on Saturday, June 10 1780. To the Lisnavein Independent Rangers, Trough Volunteers, Lisuney Volunteers, and Monaghan Rangers. Published at the Desire of the Lisnavein Independent Rangers.* 42p.; 8°. Edinburgh: D. Paterson, 1780.

P. Higly (Dublin):**1779:**

Simcockes, Thomas. *A Sermon Preached at Saint Thomas's Church, on Sunday the 19th and 26th of September, 1779. By the Rev. Thomas Simcockes, Curate of St. Thomas's, Dublin. Published at the Request of the Dublin Volunteers.* Dublin: P. Higly, [1779]. 16p.; 4°. A British Six-Pence.

M. Mills (Dublin):**1779:**

Butler, Samuel. *A Sermon Preached in the Parish Church of St. Michan, Dublin, on Sunday the 17th day of October, 1779, By the Rev. Samuel Butler, L.L.B. Curate of Said Parish, before the Goldsmiths' Company of Volunteers in Dublin, and Printed at their Unanimous Request.* Dublin: M. Mills, 1779. 29,[1]p. ; 8°

W. Hallhead (Dublin):**1780:**

Booker, John Rev. *A Sermon Preached at Edgworthstown, March 19, 1780. Before the Edgworthstown Division of County of Longford ... By the Rev. John Booker.* 31,[3]p.; 8°. Dublin: William Hallhead, 1780.

Other Volunteer Addresses.

The following three Volunteer sermons are cited in Witherow's *Historical and Literary Memorials of Presbyterianism in Ireland* (1880). It is not clear however if these sermons were ever published. There are no extant copies and English Short Title Catalogue holds no records for this material.¹⁰⁸

1783:

McDowell, Benjamin. *Sermon Preached at Mary's Abbey on 16th March, 1783, and Published at the Request of the First Regiment of the Irish Brigade* [n.p.: n. pub., 1783].

Date unknown:

Ferguson, Andrew, Jun. *A Sermon Preached before the Volunteers*. Ferguson (active 1725-1787), minister at Burt. Volunteer sermon preached before 1787.

Hutton, Joseph. *A Volunteer Sermon*. Hutton (1765-1856), Minister of Eustace St. Congregation, Dublin.

108 Witherow, *Historical and Literary Memorials of Presbyterianism in Ireland, Second Series: 1731-1800*, pp. 145, 150, 332, 335.